

fuel flange, form the second tortuous path when the fuel flange is molded around the connector body. The method features of claim 18 are not disclosed or suggested in the cited art.

The examiner stated that the mere provision of the "rib feature" does not give patentable weight. The examiner has made a mistake. The rib features of claims must be given patentable weight otherwise the examiner is not examining the claim properly. It should be noted that the claims are not claiming merely a structural attribute in a method claim. The rib features are claimed in the claims in regard to method steps of forming the second tortuous path. Claim 18 claims forming a connector body with second ribs comprising a substantially uniform series of ribs looping around an exterior of the connector body. Claim 18 further claims molding the fuel flange around the connector body for forming the second tortuous path; the second ribs (the substantially uniform series of ribs looping around an exterior of the connector body) defining the second tortuous path. These combination of method steps relating to the "rib" feature are not disclosed or suggested in the cited art. These method steps are entitled to patentable weight and should not be ignored. Failure to give these steps patentable weight is a failure to review the claim as a whole.

It is not obvious to combine Bickford et al. with Onoda. Even if, for the sake of argument, it is considered obvious, this still would not result in applicants' invention as claimed in claim 18. Claim 18 claims forming a connector body with a substantially uniform series of ribs looping around an

exterior of the connector body. Claim 18 claims molding the fuel flange around the connector body at the ribs to form a second tortuous path. Neither Bickford et al. nor Onoda disclose or suggest forming a connector body with a substantially uniform series of ribs looping around an exterior of the connector body. Neither Bickford et al. nor Onoda disclose or suggest molding a fuel flange around the connector body at the substantially uniform series of ribs to form a second tortuous path.

As the examiner has pointed out, Bickford et al. discloses threaded surface 28. However, this is for screwing the insulating body 14 into the bulkhead 26. There is no disclosure or suggestion of overmolding a fuel flange on the threaded surface 28. Overmolding a member onto the screw threads 28 would defeat the purpose of the screw threads; to allow the body 14 to be screwed into the threads 30 of the bulkhead 26 (see Fig. 3). Thus, it would not be obvious for a person skilled in the art to use screw threads 28 for forming a tortuous path with an overmolded fuel flange. There appears to be no suggestion to provided screw threads 28 of Bickford et al. on body 36 of Onoda. This is because the body 37 in Onoda is overmolded onto the body 36; not screwed into the body 37. Therefore, it does not appear to be obvious to combine Bickford et al. with Onoda as the examiner has attempted to do. The examiner is requested to reconsider her rejection of claim 18. The features of claim 18 are not disclosed or suggested in the art of record. Therefore, claim 18 is patentable and should be allowed.

Claim 25 claims a method of forming a vehicle fuel tank combined fuel flange and electrical connector. The method includes overmolding a flange member onto the pre-mold electrical connector, wherein the pre-mold housing comprises a series of circumferential ribs on an exterior side which form a second tortuous joint between the flange member and the pre-mold electrical connector. This is in combination with molding the pre-mold housing with first tortuous joints with electrical conductors. Nowhere in the cited art is there a disclosure or suggestion of body 36 of Onoda having a series of circumferential ribs on an exterior side which, when the body 37 is molded on the body 36, form a second tortuous joint. In regard to threaded surface 28 of Bickford et al., this is for screwing the insulating body 14 into the bulkhead 26. There is no disclosure or suggestion of overmolding a fuel flange on the threaded surface 28. Overmolding a member onto the screw threads 28 would defeat the purpose of the screw threads; to allow the body 14 to be screwed into the threads 30 of the bulkhead 26 (see Fig. 3). Thus, it would not be obvious for a person skilled in the art to use screw threads 28 for forming a tortuous path with an overmolded fuel flange. There appears to be no suggestion to provided screw threads on body 36 of Onoda because in Onoda the body 37 is overmolded onto the body 36; not screwed into the body 37. Therefore, it does not appear to be obvious to combine Bickford et al. with Onoda as the examiner has attempted to do. The features of claim 25 are not disclosed or suggested in the art of record. Therefore, claim 25 is patentable and should be allowed.

The examiner's suggestion on amending the claims is appreciated. However, the claims as presently pending are patentable over the art of record. Therefore, the claims will not be amended or narrowed any further.

Favorable consideration and allowance is respectfully requested. Should any unresolved issue remain, the examiner is invited to call applicants' attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark F. Harrington
Mark F. Harrington (Reg. No. 31,686)

10/3/05
Date

Customer No.: 29683
Harrington & Smith, LLP
4 Research Drive
Shelton, CT 06484-6212
203-925-9400

CERTIFICATION OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being facsimile transmitted to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on the date shown below.

10/3/2005
Date

Elaine F. Muri
Name of Person Making Deposit